

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13 HA-05 TRSE-00
OMB-01 /098 W
-----015070 091838Z /45

R 091700Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8954
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
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USEEC
USOEC
E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, UK
SUBJECT: TUC PRELIMINARY AGENDA PROVIDES ENCOURAGEMENT
FOR THE GOVERNMENT.
REF: LONDON 12695
SUMMARY: THE PRELIMINARY AGENDA FOR THE SEPTEMBER
TRADES UNION CONGRESS WAS PUBLISHED JULY 31. THE
AGENDA CONTAINS 119 MOTIONS PROPOSED BY AFFILIATED
UNIONS; THIS NUMBER WILL BE REDUCED BY EVENTUAL
COMPOSITING AND TAILORED BY AMENDMENTS. IN ITS
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PRESENT FORM THE AGENDA CONTAINS A NUMBER OF
MOTIONS CRITICAL OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL AND THE
GOVERNMENT. GENERALLY, HOWEVER, THE LEADERS OF THE
LABOR MOVEMENT WILL BE ENCOURAGED SINCE THE AGENDA
INDICATES THAT DRASTIC CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT IS
LIKELY TO BE SOFTENED. THERE WILL BE REJECTION OF
CONTINUED GOVERNMENT PAY POLICY (AS EXPECTED) BUT THERE

IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONGRESS TO OPEN THE DOOR TO REGULAR AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND TRADE UNIONS ON A RANGE OF ECONOMIC ISSUES, WHICH IN PRACTICE WOULD EVENTUALLY INCLUDE PAY. CONGRESS REACTION TO THESE PROPOSALS CANNOT BE PREDICTED. MOREOVER THE AGENDA CONTAINS CALLS FOR THE RE-ELECTION OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WHICH MR. CALLAGHAN CAN USE TO CLAIM TO THE ELECTORATE THAT HE HAS MAINTAINED THE SPECIAL CONFIDENCE OF THE TRADE UNIONS DESPITE DISAGREEMENTS. THERE IS ALSO EVIDENCE OF A SHIFT IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF TUC INTERNATIONAL POLICY. MOTIONS PROPOSED THIS YEAR ARE MORE GENERAL IN THEIR CALLS FOR TRADE UNION RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD AND LESS SELECTIVE ABOUT THE EXCLUSION OF EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES THAN IS USUALLY THE CASE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PRELIMINARY AGENDA FOR THE 1978 TRADES UNION CONGRESS WAS PUBLISHED JULY 31. THE MOTIONS CONTAINED IN THE PRELIMINARY AGENDA WILL BE SUBJECTED TO AMENDMENT AND POSSIBLE COMPOSITION (I.E. MELDING WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE SPONSORS) DURING THE FOUR WEEKS BEFORE CONGRESS OPENS ON SEPTEMBER 4. WHILE AMENDMENTS AND THE WORK OF THE COMPOSITING COMMITTEE WILL CHANGE THE SUBSTANCE AND FORM OF MANY OF THE MOTIONS, THE CURRENT AGENDA GIVES A CLEAR INDICATION OF THE SCOPE OF THE DEBATES AT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONGRESS.

2. THIS YEAR THE MORE IMPORTANT MOTIONS ON THE AGENDA SEEM TO INDICATE FIVE BROAD AREAS OF INTEREST: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, LABOR LAW, INTERNAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES. WHEN AND HOW THE MOTIONS WILL BE TREATED WILL DEPEND ON THE ORDER OF BUSINESS OF THE CONGRESS, A SEPARATE AND IMPORTANT MATTER WHICH IS THE PROVINCE OF THE TUC GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE.

3. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.
. THERE ARE FOUR MOTIONS CONCERNED WITH INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, AS WELL AS ONE TABLED IN THE INTERNATIONAL SECTION BUT EXCLUSIVELY CONCERNED WITH NORTHERN IRELAND. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THIS NUMBER WILL BE REDUCED BY LATER COMPOSITING. THE GENERAL TONE OF THE MOTIONS IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF MOST TUC INTERNATIONAL DEBATES SINCE THE MOTIONS (WITH ONE EXCEPTION) DO NOT CALL FOR CONDEMNATION OF SPECIFIC REGIMES. THE EXCEPTION CALLING FOR A REAFFIRMATION OF A CONDEMNATION OF THE CHILEAN "JUNTA" DOES LITTLE BUT

RESTATE EXISTING CONGRESS POLICY; BUT TWO OTHER MOTIONS
PROPOSED BY THE ELECTRICAL AND STEEL UNIONS MAY GIVE
SOME PROBLEMS TO THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL WHICH
CONTINUES TO SAY NOTHING PUBLICLY ABOUT HUMAN AND TRADE
UNION RIGHTS IN EASTERN EUROPE.(THE TUC POSITION IS TO

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COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13 HA-05 TRSE-00
OMB-01 /098 W

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R 091700Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8955
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
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AWAIT THE OUTCOME OF THE ICFTU COMPLAINT TO THE ILO
"WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO INFORMAL INQUIRIES"). IN THEIR
OWN WAY THE ELECTRICAL AND STEEL UNION RESOLUTIONS
STRESS COMMITMENT FOR THE TUC TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS
AND FREE TRADE UNIONISM "ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD WITHOUT
EXCEPTION." NEITHER MOTION MENTIONS A SPECIFIC
COUNTRY, BUT THE STEELWORKERS MAKE A POINTED REFERENCE
TO "THE USE OF PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT AS A MEANS OF

SUPPRESSING TRADE UNION INDEPENDENCE."

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. THE REMOVAL OF MOTIONS AIMED AT SPECIFIC COUNTRIES IN FAVOR OF MORE GENERALIZED APPROACH REFLECTS RESTIVENESS IN THE RANKS ABOUT THE TUC'S SELECTIVE INTERNATIONAL POLICY BEHAVIOR, AND A BID FOR SUPPORT AT THE CONGRESS BY WELL-KNOWN CRITICS OF EASTERN EUROPE, SUCH AS THE ELECTRICIANS' FRANK CHAPPLE. FEELING IS SURFACING AMONG SOME UNIONS THAT TUC POLICY ON EASTERN EUROPE HAS BEEN TOO SOFT AND ONE-SIDED. THUS, THE NEW "RIGHT-WING" DOMINATED AUEW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HAS NOW BANNED THE EXCHANGE OF OFFICIAL DELEGATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION TO RECORD "REVULSION" OVER THE SOVIET TREATMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGNERS (REFTEL). INDIVIDUAL TUC AFFILIATES, SPURRED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, HAVE BEEN PROTESTING TO SOVIET LABOR OPPOSITE NUMBERS OVER THE REPRESSION OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS, AND THE LABOR PARTY HAS CUT LOOSE FROM THE TUC OFFICIAL POLICY OF SILENCE TO OPENLY ENDORSE THE ICFTU COMPLAINT TO THE ILO CONCERNING TRADE UNION RIGHTS IN THE USSR.

4. MOREOVER, WITHIN THE TUC STRUCTURE, GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBERS SAY THE TOLERANCE LEVEL FOR EASTERN EUROPEAN REGIMES WILL LIKELY BE REDUCED BY THE DEPARTURE, AFTER THIS CONGRESS, OF JACK JONES WHO IS CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE. HIS SUCCESSOR IS STILL NOT KNOWN, BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT WHOEVER TAKES THE JOB, AND IT IS NOT A PARTICULARLY ATTRACTIVE ONE IN TERMS OF INTERNAL TUC POLITICS, WILL BE LESS INCLINED TO THE TENDENCY IN THE TUC TO SHIELD EASTERN EUROPEAN REGIMES FROM CRITICISM.

5. LABOR LAW.

. MOTIONS PROPOSED FOR THE REFORM OF EXISTING
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LABOR LEGISLATION ARE GENERALLY COMPLIMENTARY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD IN THIS AREA. THERE IS PRAISE FOR THE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES MADE BY THE LABOR GOVERNMENT SINCE 1974, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROBLEMS THAT HAVE ARISEN FROM, FOR INSTANCE, THE EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, IS PLACED FIRMLY WITH THE JUDICIARY. THUS THERE IS A GENERAL

CALL FOR TUC PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT TO BLOCK SOME OF THE LOOP-HOLES THAT HAVE GROWN. THE AREAS COVERED BY THESE REQUESTS INCLUDE THE INDUSTRIAL TRIBUNAL SYSTEM, REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS (WHERE THERE IS SOME CONCERN THAT PUBLIC SECTOR SETTLEMENTS ARE FAR OUTSTRIPPING THOSE WON IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR), SEX DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT AND SOME AREAS OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION. THE MAJOR PROPOSAL, HOWEVER, IS CONCERNED WITH THE CLOSED (UNION) SHOP. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE MOTION WILL APPEAR ON THE FINAL AGENDA, OR IF IT WILL PROCEED TO A VOTE; AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, IT CALLS FOR LEGAL ENFORCEMENT OF THE UNION SHOP BY A BALLOT VOTE. THIS REPRESENTS A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM EXISTING PRACTICE WHERE THE UNION SHOP IS A MATTER FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONGRESS DECISION ON THE MOTION (SHOULD IT COME TO A VOTE) CAN BE SEEN IN THE COMING ELECTION. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE TORIES WILL BE CONCERNED TO MAKE SOME CAPITAL FROM THE UNION SHOP AS AN INFRINGEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY. WHILE PRECISE TORY PROPOSALS REMAIN UNCERTAIN, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT A COMMITMENT OF THE KIND INDICATED BY THE TUC MOTION WOULD ENABLE THE TORIES TO ARGUE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD EXTEND UNION SHOP PROVISIONS IN LINE WITH THE DEMANDS OF THE TUC.

6. INTERNAL ECONOMIC

. THERE ARE OVER FORTY MOTIONS TABLED RELATING TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ECONOMIC ISSUES OF VARIOUS SORTS. VARYING FROM BROAD STATEMENTS OF SOCIALIST ECONOMIC PRIORITIES TO THE MORE SPECIFIC CALLS FOR INDIVIDUAL POLICY INITIATIVE ON UNEMPLOYMENT AND PAY. THERE ARE TWO VERY GENERALIZED ECONOMIC MOTIONS, ONE

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COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13 HA-05 TRSE-00

OMB-01 /098 W

-----015132 091839Z /45

R 091700Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8956

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PRAISING THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS ECONOMIC RECORD
IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS AND CALLING FOR
"FURTHER POLICIES AIMED AT REDUCING INFLATION,
INCREASING REAL LIVING STANDARDS AND REDUCING
UNEMPLOYMENT." THE OTHER, FROM THE LEFT-TINGED
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' UNION "BELIEVES THAT THE
RETURN OF A LABOR GOVERNMENT AT THE NEXT
GENERAL ELECTION" WILL BE AIDED BY THE
ADOPTION OF SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS TO FURTHER
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NATIONALIZATION, INVESTMENT CONTROLS,
REDUCTIONS IN DEFENSE SPENDING, REDISTRIBUTION OF
INCOME AND WEALTH, A\$.943 3**3:58;3 048:3 :9,549) .
THIS COLLECTION OF TRADITIONAL SOCIALIST ECONOMICS
IS SOMEWHAT TYPICAL OF THE KIND OF MOTION THAT IS
DEBATED AT TUC. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REHEARSE
WELL-KNOWN RHETORIC AND IS DIFFICULT FOR A "TRUE
SOCIALIST" TRADE UNION LEADER TO OPPOSE. THERE IS BOUND T
BE SOME CONCERN HOWEVER, AMONG GENERAL COUNCIL
MEMBERS AT THE COMMITMENTS THE MOTION IMPLIES
FOR A BROAD RANGE OF POLICIES. AS IT STANDS THE

MOTION READS SOMETHING LIKE THE LEFT-WINGERS IDEAL LABOR PARTY ELECTION MANIFESTO, AND IT WILL NO DOUBT BE OPPOSED BY THOSE WHO WILL ARGUE THAT IT IS TOO GENERALIZED TO BE OF PRACTICAL HELP.

7. THERE ARE 19 MOTIONS ON THE AGENDA ADDRESSED TO UNEMPLOYMENT. THIS NUMBER WILL BE REDUCED BY THE COMPOSITING COMMITTEE. THERE IS A UNIFORMITY AMONG THE MOTIONS; THEY ARE ALL CAREFUL TO BEMOAN THE "TERRIBLE WASTE OF HUMAN RESOURCES" REPRESENTED BY " MORE THAN ONE MILLION UNEMPLOYED FOR THREE YEARS" WITHOUT BEING TOO DIRECTLY CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT POLICY. THE MOTIONS REFLECT THE GENERAL THRUST OF TRADE UNION POLICY ON UNEMPLOYMENT, CONCENTRATING IN SOME WAY ON REDUCTIONS IN THE WORK WEEK, THE WORKING YEAR, AND RETIREMENT AGE. THERE IS ALSO A REFERENCE TO THE NEED FOR A TUC CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE OVERTIME WORKING IN THOSE INDUSTRIES WHERE IT IS PREVALANT. GENERALLY, THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE SERIOUSLY EMBARRASSED IN THIS AREA BY THE RESOLUTIONS PROPOSED, THOUGH IF ITS RECORD IS SENSITIVE TO ANY ONE ISSUE, THEN IT IS UNEMPLOYMENT.
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8. THERE ARE TWENTY MOTIONS ON THE PRELIMINARY AGENDA THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT PAY POLICY. THIS NUMBER WILL BE REDUCED TO TWO OR THREE COMPOSITE MOTIONS BEFORE THE DEBATE BEGINS. OF THE EXISTING MOTIONS, WHILE NONE SPECIFICALLY REFER TO THE GOVERNMENT'S FIVE PERCENT POLICY, THIRTEEN OF THEM DIRECTLY OPPOSE THE CONTINUATION OF CENTRALIZED PAY RESTRAINT IN ANY FORM. IMPORTANT IS THE ABSENCE FROM THESE MOTIONS OF ANY FROM THE BIG UNIONS. THE TGWU AND THE ENGINEERING SECTION OF THE AUEW HAVE BOTH AVOIDED TABLING MOTIONS ON PAY POLICY. WHILE THEY ARE COMMITTED BY THEIR POLICY BODIES TO OPPOSE THE CONTINUATION OF PAY POLICY, IT IS SEEN AS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE LEADERS OF THESE MAJOR UNIONS HAVE AVOIDED PROPOSING MOTIONS CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE ANTI-PAY POLICY MOTIONS CONCENTRATE ON THE PROBLEMS OF RIGIDITIES AND DIFFERENTIALS POSED BY PAST PHASES AND THE REITERATION OF CONGRESS POLICY ON THE RETURN TT "FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING." THOSE MOTIONS WHICH TAKE A LESS STAUNCHLV ANTI-PAP POLICY LINE ARE THOSE THAT RECOONIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WITHIN "THE FRAMEWORK OF AN ECONOMIC CONTRACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT," OR "AN OVERALL ECONOMIC POLICY THAT IS AGREED WITH THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT." IT WILL BE

SOME COMPOSITE OF THESE MOTIONS THAT THE GENERAL COUNCIL (AND THE GOVERNMENT) WOULD LIKE TO HAVE. AT ALL COSTS IT WILL HOPE TO SIDE-TRACK THE MOTIONS . THAT CALL UPON THE GENERAL COUNCIL TO OFFER "PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR ANY TRADE UNION TAKING (INDUSTRIAL ACTION) AGAINST (GOVERNMENT) RESTRICTIONS,"

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COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13 HA-05 TRSE-00
OMB-01 /098 W

-----015353 091840Z /45

R 091700Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8957
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SINCE SUCH MANDATES WOULD SEVERELY PROSCRIBE THE GENERAL COUNCIL'S FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT DURING THE COMING YEAR."

9. POLITICAL.

. THE STAUNCHLY PRO-GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP OF THE ENGINEERING SECTION OF THE AUEW HAS PROPOSED A MOTION AFFIRMING CONGRESS SUPPORT FOR THE RETURN OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT AT THE NEXT ELECTION. ON THE SURFACE THIS MOTION SEEMS ONLY TO FORMALIZE THE CURRENT ALIGN-

MENT OF THE TUC AND THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, SOME
KEY GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBERS SEE SUCH A DIRECT PARTISAN
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ENDORSEMENT AS COURTING AWKWARD DISCUSSIONS AND MAJOR
ABSTENTIONS (BY "NON-PARTISAN" PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNIONS)
OVER DRAWING THE LINE BETWEEN TRADE UNION AND PARTY
POLITICAL ACTION. YET, TUC LEADERS WANT THE CONGRESS TO
PROVIDE AN ELECTION PLATFORM FOR MR. CALLAGHAN WHEN HE
SPEAKS ON THE TUESDAY. THERE WILL BE CONGRESS
REJECTIONS OF ELEMENTS OF LABOR'S RECORD DURING THE
DEBATES, BUT THE GOVERNMENT WILL STILL BE ABLE
TO POINT TO ITS CONTINUED SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH
THE TRADE UNIONS WHEN THE RHETORIC HAS DIED DOWN.
NO MATTER WHAT THE CONGRESS HAS SAID ABOUT PAY
POLICY OR UNEMPLOYMENT, IT WILL IN THE END, IN
PRACTICE, COMMIT ITSELF TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH
A LABOR GOVERNMENT - EVEN IF AT ARMS LENGTH ON SOME
ISSUES. THIS MAY NOT BE TOO IMPORTANT FOR THE
TRADE UNION DELEGATES IN THE HALL, BUT IT
COULD PROVE TO BE IMPORTANT FOR MR. CALLAGHAN IN
THE COUNTRY.

10. THE OVERALL IMPRESSION CREATED BY THE PRELIMINARY
AGENDA IS THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE TUC, AT LEAST
INITIALLY, HAS SUCCESSFULLY MANEUVERED TO REDUCE
THE ODDS OF AN OPEN RANK AND FILE BACKLASH THAT
COULD SERIOUSLY WOUND CALLAGHAN. MOTIONS EXIST THAT
ARE CRITICAL OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL AND THE GOVERNMENT,
BUT THERE IS NO PROPOSAL ON THE SURFACE THAT COULD
FORM THE KERNEL OF A SUBSTANTIAL RANK AND FILE REVOLT.
BUT TUC LEADERS ARE WORKING HARD AND CAUTIOUSLY TO
PRECLUDE ANY UNFORESEEN FLAREUP THAT MAY SUBSTANTIVELY
HARM TRADE UNION-LABOR GOVERNMENT WORKING RELATIONSHIPS.
INDEED IT IS SURPRISING THAT THERE ARE ONLY LL9
MOTIONS ON THE PRELIMINARY AGENDA. COMPOSITING AND
WITHDRAWALS WILL REDUCE THIS STILL FURTHER AND IT IS
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PROBABLE THAT CONGRESS WILL ACTUALLY DEBATE FEWER
MOTIONS THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR SOME TIME. IF
THIS TURNS OUT TO BE SO, THE GENERAL COUNCIL AND THE
GOVERNMENT WILL BE HAPPY THAT THEY HAVE AVOIDED THE
CONFRONTATION WITH THE RANK AND FILE THAT AT ONE
STAGE SEEMED POSSIBLE. IT HAS NOT YET BEEN AVOIDED,
BUT THE FIRST HURDLE HAS BEEN NEGOTIATED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING AGENDA, TRADE, LABOR UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON12718
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780326-0264
Format: TEL
From: LONDON USEEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780883/aaaacrkj.tel
Line Count: 497
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 80e66d66-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 10
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 LONDON 12695
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1793725
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TUC PRELIMINARY AGENDA PROVIDES ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE GOVERNMENT.
TAGS: ELAB, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/80e66d66-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014